



# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

1230 YORK AVENUE · NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10021

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

June 29, 1978

Memo to the file

Subject: Conversation with Dr. Robert Michaels  
at Cornell Payne Whitney Psychiatry

Date: Wednesday, June 28th.

This meeting was at my initiative but Bob told me that it could not have been more timely as he was just at the point where he felt able to come to focus on his research program. He has spent the last four years building up what he believes to be an excellent clinical establishment. It is certainly much sought after for residency training. He told me that he was hoping that the President of Rockefeller would walk into his office one day and provide for the complementary opportunity that in fact exists.

He first gave me the historical development of the situation. The Payne Whitney Clinic is a relatively independent unit of the New York Hospital-Cornell complex. In fact, the clinical operations both of the Payne Whitney and of the Westchester division now report directly to him. Only in 1965 was Westchester officially linked to Cornell. The previous role of Payne Whitney and psychiatry in that area had been to provide psychiatric service to a rather affluent clientele. There was some development of social psychiatry under latent and The outstanding work in psychosomatic medicine by Harold Wolf was in fact based in neurology. At the present time Payne Whitney is unusual in that it is the only psychiatric department in New York City which is not connected with a government psychiatric institute. In many places there are state more than federal institutions which have provided for local support of research and which have tended to delay or defer the role of psychiatry in support, for example, by NIMH. Payne Whitney did not even have that. So Cornell was never in that kind of market. Lacking an academic base at home there have been relatively few links with the Rockefeller University. Bill Leyman did take his sabbatical

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with Carl Pfaffmann some years ago.

Now that the clinical operations which number 108 beds at Payne Whitney and 322 at Westchester are under firm control Michaels feels that it is time to build up the biological arm of the department for both research and residency training purposes. However, he believes that psychiatric research has a low priority for research investment at Cornell and he would be somewhat stymied about such developments at the present site. He had therefore emphasized the possibility of laboratories at Westchester: for example, in a flirtation with Saul Snyder which apparently has fallen through. Michaels himself expressed some concern about the balance of entrepreneurial and scientific eminence expressed there.

He was delighted at the idea of a joint appointment which would allow for a clinical and teaching base in psychiatry at Payne Whitney and a research base at the Hospital. He had previously been looking to the group in behavioral sciences rather than the hospital as a link. I told him that it would be imperative in any case to pull those two together at RU.

He expressed his personal base that our research opportunities were not particularly apt for short run large scale clinical experiments, like testing drug efficacy; and of course I could not agree more!

I expressed a few of the areas that I thought might be fairly obvious targets: namely, anorexia and depression. His own interests at the present time have to do with the perinatal complex I assume along lines similar to those that Herb Leiderman is interested in. Daniel Stern seems to be the principal actor in his group and I assume that Stern has been in contact with Cole and Miller.

There is a little about this in Michaels annual report to the Dean last year where he refers to the acquisition of language by Stern and Shapiro as an important research effort. This is not the line that would most readily command the interest of the biochemical wing of the Rockefeller University but I don't think that there is anything like closure on this question at the present time.

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Michaels expressed an interest in the organization of the University and I promised to send him an Annual Report. He also asked for a statement about my own views on the development of these strategies and on that I may have to disappointment him for awhile. We agreed to stay in touch on opportunities as they might arise and that I would communicate his very positive sentiments to the group at the Hospital. Conversely, he has a good account of the clinical and training programs and will send me the material that they send to prospective residents.

*Pfaffman  
added  
same.*